

April 29, 2020

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ALL COUNTY LETTER NO. 20-51

This All County Letter (ACL) provides county child welfare agencies and juvenile probation departments with guidance on providing additional outreach to foster caregivers sixty-five (65) years of age or older who, due to their age, are at higher risk of severe illness from the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19).



KIM JOHNSON
DIRECTOR

GAVIN NEWSOM
GOVERNOR

April 29, 2020

ALL COUNTY LETTER NO. 20-51

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL COUNTY CHILD WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL CHIEF PROBATION OFFICERS
ALL CHILD WELFARE SERVICES PROGRAM MANAGERS

SUBJECT: Guidance For County Placement Agencies Regarding Outreach To Foster Caregivers 65 Years Of Age Or Older During The COVID-19 State Of Emergency

REFERENCE: [GOVERNOR'S PROCLAMATION OF A STATE OF EMERGENCY, MARCH 4, 2020](#)

The purpose of this letter is to provide county child welfare agencies and juvenile probation departments with guidance on providing additional outreach and assistance to foster caregivers¹ sixty-five (65) years of age or older for whom, due to their age, there is a higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

BACKGROUND

On April 13, 2020, [Governor Newsom announced \\$42 million in additional investments](#) to address COVID-19 impacts on children and families. These investments included funding to support county placing agencies' outreach to older foster caregivers at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 due to their age to assist them in meeting needs for supports or services and in emergency planning. A County Fiscal Letter (CFL) is forthcoming that will provide information regarding county allocations and claiming for the temporary outreach activities outlined in this letter.

OUTREACH AND EMERGENCY PLANNING

While county placing agencies should assist all caregivers in planning for a circumstance where the child or caregiver presents with symptoms of, or tests positive for, COVID-19, and many counties may have already done so, it is particularly critical for county agencies to initiate communication for COVID-19 impact planning and

¹ For the purpose of this letter, foster caregiver means a resource family, an Intensive Services Foster Care resource family, a licensed foster home, a certified family home, or a tribally approved home.

preparedness with all foster caregivers 65 years of age and older who are providing care for dependents or wards of that county due to their higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19. This outreach may be integrated into a caseworker's existing mandated monthly contacts with caregivers and/or occur as supplemental contact during the state of emergency, and may be made through other county child welfare or probation staff who are in contact with the caregiver.

This outreach and emergency planning are intended to ensure that proper care and supervision of foster children is maintained if a foster child, their caregiver, or another individual in the home is exposed to, presents symptoms of, or tests positive for, COVID-19. It is also intended to connect caregivers with resources they may need. If there are concerns about the caregiver's potential inability to provide ongoing care for the child(ren) in their care if they present with symptoms of, or test positive for, COVID-19, the caseworker should discuss with the caregiver what may assist in preserving the placement.

Resources to discuss with the caregiver may include help from the caregiver's support network, as well as local supports and community resources, such as the statewide 211 helpline and [website](#). Other supports also include the statewide Parents Anonymous warm line, which provides emotional and peer supports and resource referrals to parents and caregivers via phone, text, or video call, and local Family Resource Centers or Child Abuse Prevention Centers, which provide foster caregivers and at-risk families with material supports, information, and resources.

Federal Funding Flexibility for Cell Phones and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Children's Bureau recently provided [clarification](#) that the purchase and operation of cellular phones for children and youth in foster care, their parents, or foster parents, is an allowable cost under Title IV-B of the Social Security Act and/or the Chafee Foster Care Program. The purchase of a cellular phone for a parent or foster parent/caregiver can meet a Title IV-B program purpose if it is determined that it will facilitate needed communications for case management between such an individual and the agency caseworker, or allow a parent to participate in a remote court hearing or visitation with the child.

Additionally, as referenced in [All County Information Notice \(ACIN\) I-32-20](#), current and former foster youth between 13-26 years of age who were in foster care on their 13th birthday or later may access cell phones through the iFoster-administered Phones for Foster Youth Program. The recent investments announced by the Governor also included additional funding for cell phones and laptops for foster youth without these eligibility restrictions.

Further, PPE is an allowable expenditure of Title IV-B funds. The purchase and distribution of PPE to caregivers is authorized to, “prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus.” CDSS is aware that most counties have already expended their current Title IV-B allocations; however, with this clarification, ACF has also allocated a small amount of additional funds which may assist with these items. A CFL will be forthcoming that will provide information regarding how to claim these items under the Title IV-B program.

DOCUMENTATION OF OUTREACH

The outreach and emergency planning described in this letter must be documented in the case notes for the child, even if the outreach occurred prior to release of this letter. If the documentation is related to COVID-19 exposure, symptoms, or positive/negative tests, please refer to [ACIN I-31-20](#) for the proper method of documentation and associated confidentiality for such data.

EFFECTIVE PERIOD OF THIS GUIDANCE

The requirement on county placing agencies to conduct additional outreach to older caregivers as it relates to COVID-19 impacts should occur as soon as possible but in no case later than June 30, 2020, consistent with the allocation information contained in a forthcoming CFL.

Any policy related questions regarding this ACL should be directed to CFSD@dss.ca.gov. Any fiscal related questions should be directed to fiscal.systems@dss.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Original Document Signed By:

GREGORY E. ROSE
Deputy Director
Children and Family Services Division

c: County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA)
Chief Probation Officers of California (CPOC)
Title IV-E Agreement Tribes